

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PANAMA 05293 252219Z

ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-02 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-15 SAB-02 IO-14 OES-07 EB-08 DLOS-09 /112 W

-----072289 252224Z /61

P R 252152Z JUL 77

FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2892

INFO PANCANAL

USCINCSO

UNCLAS PANAMA 5293

EO 11652: N/A

TAGS: PBOR, PINT, ELAB, PN

SUBJECT: TREATY NEGOTIATIONS - MEDIA COVERAGE

REF: PANAMA 5285

SUMMARY: WEEKEND MEDIA PLAY ON THE NEGOTIATIONS WAS MODERATE, CONSIDERING THE AMOUNT OF NEWS. (SEE REF FOR COVERAGE OF PRESIDENT CARTER'S PAZOO CITY REMARKS). CONGRESSIONAL TESTIMONY BY GOVERNOR PARIFTT AND GENERAL MCAULIFFE THAT A COMMUNIST TAKEOVER HERE WAS UNLIKELY AND ITEM BY LOCAL AP STRINGER STATING THAT THE DRAFTING OF A NEW TREATY WILL BEGIN HERE IN AUGUST WERE HEADLINED. EDITORIAL COMMENTARY URGED PANAMANIAN TO REMAIN CALM IN THE FACE OF MEDIA MISINFORMATION FROM ABROAD, AND DEFENDED FOREIGN MINISTRY'S DECISION TO DEFER PUBLIC DISCUSSION ON TREATY. END SUMMARY.

1. SEMI-INDEPENDENT "LA ESTRELLA" AND "STAR AND HERALD" SATURDAY HEADLINED AP STORY ON CONGRESSIONAL TESTIMONY BY CANAL ZONE OFFICIALS WITH "NO RED TAKEOVER HERE SEEN BY TOP U.S. OFFICIALS". ARTICLE QUOTES CANAL ZONE GOVERNOR HAROLD PARFITT AND SOUTHERN COMMAND CINC LT. GENERAL DENNIS P. MCAULIFFE AS ASSURING A SENATE UNCLASSIFIED

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PAGE 02 PANAMA 05293 252219Z

JUDICIARY SUB-COMMITTEE THAT "WHILE SOME PANAMANIAN ADVISORS ARE COMMUNISTS, THEY DO NOT CONTROL THE GOVERNMENT". MCAULIFFE IS QUOTED AS SAYING THAT "THE COMMUNIST THREAT IS NOT A REAL ONE FOR PANAMA". OTHER MEDIA IGNORED THE STORY.

2. IN A FRONT-PAGE STORY IN SATURDAY'S "LA ESTRELLA"

AND "STAR AND HERALD", LOCAL AP STRONGER ANNIE ORTIZ QUOTES A MEMBER OF THE PANAMANIAN NEGOTIATING TEAM AS STATING THAT THE U.S. AND PANAMA WILL BEGIN WRITING A NEW CANAL TREATY WHEN THE U.S. NEGOTIATING TEAM RETURNS TO PANAMA IN ABOUT ONE MONTH. THIS WOULD FOLLOW ANOTHER 10-DAY NEGOTIATING SESSION IN WASHINGTON AND A 2-WEEK REVIEW PERIOD DURING WHICH BOTH SIDES WOULD STUDY THE CONCEPTUAL AGREEMENTS, ACCORDING TO THE SOURCE. THE PANAMANIAN DIPLOMAT ALSO SAID THAT THE ISSUE OF JOINT USE OF MILITARY TRAINING AREAS IS UNRESOLVED, NOTING THAT "THESE TRAINING AREAS WILL BE TREATED DIFFERENTLY FROM BASES".

3. MEDIA COMMENTARY FOCUSES ON THE CONTROVERSY OVER THE INDEPENDENT LAWYERS' MOVEMENT'S ATTACK ON THE UNBORN TREATY (PANAMA 5052 AND 5210). GOP-GUIDED "DOMINICAL" EDITORIALY SUPPORTED THE FOREIGN MINISTRY'S POSITION THAT THE COMPLETED TREATY WILL BE SUBMITTED FOR CONSIDERATION BY THE PANAMANIAN PEOPLE". "CRITICA" EDITORIAL ON JULY 25 DENOUNCED "PETARDS FROM THE AMERICAN PRESS" CITING AS EVIDENCE RECENT STORIES ON THE AMOUNT OF COMPENSATION DEMANDED BY PANAMA AND "TIME" MAGAZINE'S REPORT THAT CHILE, PERU, AND ECUADOR WERE CONCERNED ABOUT PANAMA'S ABILITY TO RUN THE CANAL.

4. SUPPORT FOR THE PANAMANIAN GOVERNMENT IS ECHOED
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PAGE 03 PANAMA 05293 252219Z

IN A LETTER, SIGNED BY MEMBERS OF THE "PRO-SOVEREIGNTY LAWYERS' MOVEMENT", THAT WAS PUBLISHED IN THE JULY 25 "CRITICA". LETTER SUPPORTS THE GOP'S COMMITMENT TO RID PANAMA OF ALL VESTIGES OF COLONIALISM BY THE YEAR 2000. IT SAYS THE NEW TREATY WILL HAVE NEITHER A PERPETUITY CLAUSE NOR ANY FORMULA FOR FOREIGN INTERVENTION IN PANAMA'S DOMESTIC AFFAIRS. IT QUESTIONS THE SINCERITY OF THOSE WHO CRITICIZE THE TREATY WITHOUT OFFERING REALISTIC ALTERNATIVES.

5. THE INDEPDEPENDENT LAWYERS CONTINUE TO PRESS THEIR CASE. IN A FULL-PAGE "ESTRELLA" ARTICLE ENTITLED "ELEMENTARY ASSIGNMENTS ON TREATY LAW", DIOGENES A. AROSEMENA CALLS FOR THE DRAFTING OF REGULATIONS FOR THE PLEBISCITE ON THE NEW TREATY. QUESTIONING WHETHER SUCH A RATIFICATION PROCESS CAN EFFECTIVELY FUNCTION WHEN POLITICAL ACTIVITY IS PROSCRIBED AND CRITICISM IS LABELED UNPATRIOTIC, AROSEMENA CALLS FOR THE "REESTABLISHMENT OF THE INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS THAT PERMIT THE FUNCTIONING OF THE FUNDAMENTAL GUARANTEES GRANTED IN THE CONSTITUTION".

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
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Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
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Office: ACTION ARA
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Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
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Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 PANAMA 5285
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 02-Dec-2004 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1759947
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: TREATY NEGOTIATIONS - MEDIA COVERAGE
TAGS: PBOR, PINT, ELAB, PN
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/adc78264-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009